

In the Way

TO ECUMENISM...

in an Upsurge of Love

"After Jesus was baptized, he came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him. With that, a voice from the heavens said, 'This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on him.'" (Mt 3:16-17)

The account of the Baptism of the beloved Son reveals to us the mystery of the Trinitarian love, the mystery of the eternal love of the Father for the Son in a common and unique Spirit of True Love, manifested in the form of a dove; the mystery also of Jesus' response of love to the Father, as He received, through His humble obedience, the baptism of John and accepted, in that unique instant in the history of God and of men, to bear upon His shoulders the full burden of the sins of humanity and thus "do all that righteousness demands". (Mt 3:15)

After two thousand years of Christianity, Jesus' Baptism in the waters of the Jordan continues to be, for every man and woman of good will, the concrete manifestation of God's gratuitous gift of love for the salvation of humanity, personified in Jesus Christ. It is also the just as tangible sign of a calling to the Christian saved in hope to reply to this divine love by living the sacramental grace of his Baptism and by striving with all his strength towards the sole goal of his life, that is to say, Christ Jesus.

THE CHRISTIAN CALLING, A TWOFOLD VOCATION

It is in this new and supernatural condition of son or daughter of God that the Christian is called henceforth to walk after Christ by placing all his will and all his energy in the service of the Father's will for the building up of the Kingdom of God on earth as in heaven.

This call to love is, by this very fact, a call to holiness and also a call to participate in the complete restoration of the divine plan in fallen man who was created to be in the image and likeness of God.

Holiness and divinization, there you have the twofold vocation of man called to walk in the footsteps of the total Christ who, in this time which is our time, wishes to entrust to the Immaculate the perfecting of the sole and unique mystery of the Cross, for the sanctification and the immaculization of the universe.

To become "holy and immaculate in love", yes, that is the true and plenary vocation of every Christian who accepts not only to be known by this name but also and above all to live, unconditionally and without compromise, all the reality of being an adopted son of God and also of Mary.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

"To me, 'life' means Christ," (Phil 1:21) Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Nations, tells us. And it is today, now, that the Lady of All Peoples, the one who once was Mary, opens us to an understanding of the twofold mystery of redemptive and co-redemptive love, of which the Cross of Christ is both the sign and the seal. And it is she, the Lady of All Peoples, who, in these times which are the latter times, invites all Christians to cooperate in a Christocentric and ecumenical Work, so that all peoples may form one and the same Community, in order "to gather into one all the dispersed children of God". (Jn 11:52)

Father Pierre MASTROPIETRO



"To me, 'life' means Christ." (St. Paul)

Of course, accepting to collaborate in this saving Work of Christ and of the Lady means to accept also and inevitably the opposition arising from the scandal of the cross. To live in Christ then means to accept to "die with Him for the nation", and it also means to accept to fight, with her and to the end, the good eschatological fight of the Woman against the dragon for the salvation and the unity of all Peoples.

A SIGN THAT WILL BE OPPOSED

"Your Son will be a sign that will be opposed" (Lk 2:34), the liturgy of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple reminds us every year, echoing the prophecy made by the elderly Simeon to Mary.

Opposition first of all between those who are "for Christ" and those who are "against Christ", distinguishing among these latter those who believe in the existence of one God Creator from those who do not have the faith but who strive to live according to the voice of their conscience.

Opposition also between those who believe in Christ but who, for reasons which the great story of human frailty does not always reveal, have followed different paths of faith with historical and doctrinal differences which are more or less great, depending on the characteristics proper to each Christian confession or denomination.

Opposition finally between those who, though they profess the same universal faith of the Catholic Church, have not always kept the same spiritual horizons, the same openness, the same availability or quite simply have not had the same ability to recognize the signs of the times.

There are those who cling to their power and their authority as though they were absolute finalities, and those who see in them, first of all, a duty and a service to be rendered out of love in the wake and after the example of the Master.

There are those who acknowledge the possibility that God and the Immaculate can still intervene in the history of humanity, and those who, on the contrary and in the name of a Revelation that is closed, have in fact muzzled them for ever. And we could illustrate through many more such comparisons just to what extent this prophecy by the elderly Simeon is an actuality and how it is quite likely to remain

such until the hour of the triumph of the pierced Heart of the Immaculate.

For, beyond all the various aspects which, throughout history, can be used to illustrate the opposition prophesied long ago by Simeon, we must face the fact that all this opposition, all this combat have a common source, in one way or another, in the loss of a deep awareness of the Christian vocation of leading a holy and immaculate life in love.

THE IMMACULATE AND THE CROSS

This vocation, all the significance and mystical and eschatological scope of which we cannot grasp here below, is accessible only in the measure that we fully accept the mystery of the pierced Heart which reveals to us the indissociable unity between the mystery of the Immaculate and that of the Cross. For it is in contemplating the Immaculate and the Cross that we can accept and understand a little better the mystery of the Co-Redemption and the mission of the Handmaid whose configured life fulfills and perfects the Christocentric Work in this time which is our time. To reject this mission is to sever from the mystery of the Cross its necessary and effective complementarity intended to give humanity back to God totally redeemed, and thus re-establish perfectly His reign of love on earth as it is in heaven. To deny this reality is to deprive the men of this time and the entire Church of the understanding and acceptance of the grace of an extraordinary mystery. "Rome, seize your chance!" the Lady said to Ida in the 38th apparition. So many signs of opposition of all kinds have arisen since then in the Church and in the world. What other sign must we still wait for, in order to convince ourselves that Christ's Revelation, regardless of how closed it might be, does not prevent the Immaculate from speaking to us, if we are able to lend an ear?...

THE LINK

In these times which are the latter times and in which there is so much talk of ecumenism and unity, we must find again, more than ever, that link from all eternity which God offers to humanity, in order to achieve the perfect and true unity for which Christ Himself prayed during the Last Supper with His disciples: "That all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be [one] in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.... that their unity may be complete." (Jn 17:21,23)

This link prepared from all eternity by the Triune God who alone can lead the men of the world of this time to the perfection of charity with God and among themselves, is of course the Immaculate. She alone, the all-divine Immaculate, can receive for men and in their name the gift that God made to men in the Incarnate Word for the Redemption. She too is the one who, in a perfect response of love, can give back to God humanity redeemed with a view to the Co-Redemption.

It is through her that God became man and it is through her that man – and this to the very end of the world – is called in turn to a plenary and perfect divinization.

The link between men and God and the link between men themselves, the Immaculate and Lady of All Peoples continues and perfects the great Work of "grace, Redemption and peace", of which she is

the divine Messenger and the wise and co-eternal Collaborator and Architect.

In this time which is the time of the Lady and our time, all of us must recognize and acknowledge this sign of the times offered to all the peoples of the earth. We must be open to and accept the gift of God, the uniting link between heaven and earth which is the Work of the Lady of All Peoples, for without her there cannot be any true ecumenism or the perfect restoration of humanity, called to holiness and to immaculization in love.

THE LADY AND HER MESSAGES, A LUMINOUS BEACON

Admittedly, the Lady, whose life and mission are configured in every respect to the life and mission of Jesus, does not escape human opposition and even less the battle against the prince of this world. Just like the Son of God, she is a sign to be opposed, fought against and rejected in the world and more particularly in the present Israel of the faith which is the Church.

However, for every man and woman of good will to whom it has been given to believe in the messages of the Lady, these messages are a luminous beacon along the road of Christian faith in order to give light to the nations, to gather together in unity all the peoples of the earth under one single Shepherd, Christ.

This is an opportunity given to the Church of Peter. Will the Church be able to seize this opportunity for its own renewal with a view to the Kingdom to come? Whatever the answer will be from those who, some day, will have to, officially and definitively, in the name of Peter, take a decision either "for" or "against" the Lady, it is no less true that each one of us must remain attentive and open to the signs of the times, in becoming aware of the importance of seizing, in a lucid and responsible manner, the passing grace.

ECUMENISM: DRAWING CLOSER TO CHRIST TO FIND THERE THE IMMACULATE

Being open to ecumenism means believing in the need for unity between all peoples and more particularly the unity between all Christians, in order to overcome, in the light of the truth and charity, all the divisions and all the pitfalls that still remain in the area of Christian faith. This also means to accept to personally draw closer to Christ, to His Mystery and His Cross, in order to find there with Him at the foot of the Cross, the One who once was Mary, and John the beloved apostle.

It is in the intimacy of the mystery of the one Cross of Christ and of the Lady that each one of us is called, through the beloved apostle, to become increasingly aware of the sublimeness of our Christian vocation and mission: Christ entrusted us to the Immaculate and entrusted the Immaculate to us – "Woman, behold your son... Son, behold your Mother". (Jn 19:26-27)

It is through this loving and filial relationship with the Immaculate that we will reach a deeper understanding of the redemptive and co-redemptive value of the Cross, and also, like the beloved apostle, take Mary into our care, so as to then be better able to take up our cross and follow Christ.

This mystery of the thoughtfulness and consideration of divine love which comes to the rescue of the weakness of men by

giving them Mary as a Mother, makes us realize the absolute necessity of the Immaculate in our lives in order to guide us, sustain us and form us at her school during our long pilgrimage here below, which is the same school as that of the True Spirit, in a joyful and loving wait for the glorious return of Christ. Thus, in the wake of the Lady, we too are called to live as true sons of Abraham and, as a result, the heirs of the Promise to whom God has promised to show His favor and give His blessings.

THE SIGNS OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE WORK OF THE LADY IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS

Some might object perhaps, as they did in Jesus' time, that all of this is well and good, but that the signs of the authenticity of the Work of the Lady of All Peoples are not all that obvious and that her messages are still contested by many people.

And yet, there are many events in the life of the Foundress of the Army of Mary, and more particularly in the Work of *Life of Love*, which prove the authenticity and confirm the realization of the messages given by the Lady of All Peoples to Ida Peerdeman, for *Life of Love* is truly the Work of the Lady of All Peoples.

Furthermore, certain more recent events, having to do with the quick departure of Father Benoît Picard from the Diocese of Little Rock in Arkansas – because he belonged to the Work and the Community of the Lady –, are also a part of the signs of the authenticity of a Work, the ecumenical fruits of which are already beginning to appear for the unity and the love of the entire Church of Christ.

FACTS, LETTERS AND TESTIMONIALS

Among these facts, we can mention the many letters from Catholics – ecclesiastics, religious and lay people – who spontaneously thought it appropriate to give their personal appreciation of the work, example and dedication of this young priest who was happy to serve God, the Immaculate and the Church.

We could also mention, and this in a very special way, all the testimonials from brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations who, although they do not all have and to the same extent a certain foundation in the Christian faith, were nevertheless able to recognize the evangelical signs of the action, the presence and the love of Christ in Father Benoît's life.

We should also remember all the letters of comprehension and support from other witnesses and friends with whom Father Benoît had a fraternal and spiritual friendship and who, although they did not share the same faith in Christ, were able to see in him a servant of God living with generosity and love in conformity with his values, his vocation and his faith.

All these facts and so many others, kept secret for the moment, are also, in a certain way, a part of the signs of Jesus, signs which He Himself gave long ago to the men of His time for the delight of the little and the humble and for the incredulity of the wise and the learned. The same is still true today, for while giving to all the possibility of seeing and accepting the reality of His Work of love, He is able to distinguish in advance between those who see and those who, even with their eyes, do not see...

A STERN WARNING

Yet the Lord gave a stern warning to the sons of Israel of yesterday, just as He does to those of today. He railed against the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum which had received more than their share of graces and blessings in the past. He confronted them and set them against the sinful cities of Tyr and Sidon and even Sodom, reminding them that if these former did not convert, they would face a much harsher final destiny than the latter.

To the sons of Israel of former times who received so much, just like the sons of the Church today who do not cease asking for a sign, the Lord gave them only the signs of Jonas and Solomon, in order to show them their hardness of heart and to warn them that they would be condemned at the Final Judgment if they did not convert.

The Lord gave the example of Nineva, the sinful city that was converted as a result of Jonas' preaching, and that of the Queen of Sheba who, although she knew nothing of the faith of Israel, sought out, from the confines of the earth, the wisdom of Solomon, in order to remind them that, from all times, the signs of God are always as powerful as they are eloquent and, furthermore, always greater than Jonas and Solomon.

A LUMINOUS VIEWPOINT FROM WHICH TO READ THE UNDERLAY OF HISTORY

It is from this luminous viewpoint of faith, hope and charity that each and every one of us must reread all that underlays the story of the Work of the Lady of All Peoples and more particularly the recent events surrounding the departure of Father Benoît from Arkansas.

As regrettable and not very edifying as this short page of ecclesial history may have been on the human level, it is nevertheless true that, once again, God will be able to draw good from evil, to see that it will all contribute to His greater glory and to the greater good of the men and women who seek Him with a sincere heart.

Beyond any judgment of values and all human or spiritual considerations, this dismissal of Father Benoît has perhaps been seen by some as a concrete gesture of solidarity in ecclesial communion with a contested episcopal collegiality; but it has also been for many Catholics and non-Catholics alike the opportunity to realize the deep opposition that exists within a divided kingdom which can no longer recognize a good tree through its good fruit.

In the facts, and in spite of the rather questionable actions which were the cause of Father Benoît's return to Canada, this entire situation, in itself quite unfortunate, besides giving rise to a great communion of faith and fraternal charity among Father Picard's friends and acquaintances, also prompted another re-reading by one and all, without distinction of beliefs or religious communion, of the signs of the times, and a common awareness of the necessity of an ecumenism that is well understood but, above all, well lived in an upsurge of renewed love, under the influence of the mystery of the Cross, in the intimacy of Christ, the Immaculate and the beloved disciple.

Feb. 4, 2005 **Fr. Pierre Mastropietro**

IN MEMORIAM

We wish to express our sincerest condolences to the families who have lost a loved one. Before the reality of death, may Christian hope be a source of comfort and peace.

BEAUDETTE, Noëlla Labbé - Sherbrooke

BEAUDRY, Robert - Lac-Etchemin
BÉDARD, Marguerite - Montreal
CHARTRAND, Marie-Laure - Timmins, ON
CLAUDE, Doris - Repentigny
DUBÉ, Alice - Saint-Hyacinthe
ÉMILE, Agnes - Montreal
GRATIAS, Paulette - Royat, France
HAGAN, Robert Edward - Owensboro, KY

HURTUBISE, Irène - Montreal
KISHKA, Jeanne - Lac-Etchemin
MATHIEU, François - St-Théophile, Beauce
MICHAUD, Jeanne - Lac-Etchemin
PLOURDE, Yvette - Edmunston, N.B.
SÉVIGNY, Gérard - East Angus
VICTOR, Andrée - New York, N.Y.
VIGNOLA, Alphonsine - Rimouski